

EXHIBIT 53

**Ryan Mac** Forbes Staff*Staff writer covering technology and e-commerce***TECH** 2/23/2017 @ 8:54PM | 41,614 views

Meet The Former Google Engineer Who Allegedly Stole Secrets For Uber



Anthony Levandowski, Otto cofounder and VP of Uber's advanced technologies group, speaks during the launch of the pilot model of the Uber self-driving car on Sept. 13, 2016 in Pittsburgh. (Photo: Angelo Merendino/AFP/Getty Images)

By Ryan Mac, Brian Solomon and Alan Ohnsman

In Oct. 2016, when Anthony Levandowski showed FORBES a demo of Uber Technologies' nascent self-driving car project, he was less than a year removed from Google. At 36, Levandowski had spent almost nine years at the search giant, spearheading its autonomous vehicles unit. But in Jan. 2016, he abruptly left and cofounded a new self-driving startup called Otto Trucking, which Uber bought less than seven months later for a reported \$680 million.

During that interview, Levandowski, vice president of Uber's advanced technologies group, went out of his way to say that his current project was not built on the intellectual property of anything he had worked on at Google.

"We did not steal any Google IP," he told FORBES at the time. "Just want to make sure, super clear on that. We built everything from scratch and we have all of the logs to make that

—just to be super clear.”

On Thursday, Waymo, the self-driving technology subsidiary of Google’s parent company, Alphabet, sued Uber alleging that the San Francisco-based ride-sharing company had stolen proprietary technology and infringed on its patents.

Levandowski, who is not personally named as a defendant in the suit, is accused of taking data and plans from the company’s self-driving car project just weeks before he resigned to start his own venture—and then bringing those plans to Uber.

In its lawsuit, Waymo said that in Dec. 2015, Levandowski “downloaded more than 14,000 highly confidential and proprietary files,” which he allegedly transferred to an external drive before attempting to reformat his laptop “to erase any forensic fingerprints.” In that data, Waymo claimed, was information about the components of the advanced LiDAR laser system both companies now use for their self-driving test vehicles. Waymo added that “this calculated theft reportedly netted Otto employees over half a billion dollars and allowed Uber to revive a stalled program, all at Waymo’s expense.”

“We take the allegations made against Otto and Uber employees seriously and we will review this matter carefully,” an Uber spokesperson said in a statement. Levandowski did not answer his phone when called by FORBES to discuss the suit and did not return an email request for comment.

Those accusations punctuate what has been a tumultuous month for Uber, which began with CEO Travis Kalanick departing President Donald Trump’s economic advisory council after heavy criticism from employees and a user boycott. On Sunday, Susan Fowler, a former Uber engineer who left the company in December, published a viral blog post that detailed a year at the company pockmarked by discrimination and sexual harassment that went unaddressed by her superiors. That post led to even more accusations about Uber’s internal culture, prompted an apology from Kalanick and kickstarted an independent investigation by the company.

Uber’s latest controversy centers around Levandowski, a long-time Google employee and serial entrepreneur who has spent his career focused on robotics and artificial intelligence. A graduate of the University of California, Berkeley with a master’s degree in industrial engineering and operations research, he founded 510 Systems in 2001 to explore the largely uncharted area of autonomous vehicle technology. In 2005, he entered a self-driving motorcycle into the DARPA Grand Challenge, where he competed against and caught the attention of Sebastian Thrun, widely seen as the godfather of Google’s driverless car project.

While Levandowski joined Google in 2007 to work on mapping technology, it wasn’t until 2011 that the search giant acquired the company he founded, 510 Systems and its sister company Anthony’s Robots. That deal was done in secret, with some employees signing non-disclosure agreements that prevented them discussing the acquisitions, according to one report. 510 became core to Google’s self-driving technology and in May



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2012, Levandowski took part in the first government-run autonomous vehicle test, which took place along the Las Vegas strip.

Levandowski would remain at Google—which would later reorganize itself as Alphabet and then separate its self-driving project into Waymo—where he was known internally as a star engineer. In Jan. 2014, he became the target of anti-Google protesters, who visited his Berkeley, Calif. home to protest what they believed to be unnecessary surveillance. That demonstration aside, Levandowski remained relatively unknown and quietly went about his work as he developed 11 patents at the company, including at least six that involved the proprietary LiDAR technology that Waymo claims Uber has co-opted.

He left Google in January and founded Otto the next month, telling online publication *Backchannel*: “I’m excited about bringing robots into the market, about having the most effect in the world.”

Waymo, however, calls into question the timing of Levandowski’s move. In its lawsuit, it said Levandowski “attended meeting with high-level executives at Uber’s headquarters” on Jan. 14, 2016, and then resigned from Waymo without notice on Jan. 27. His startup Otto was officially formed on Feb. 1.

“Beyond Mr. Levandowski’s actions, we discovered that other former Waymo employees, now at Otto and Uber, downloaded additional highly confidential information pertaining to our custom-built LiDAR including supplier lists, manufacturing details and statements of work with highly technical information,” Waymo said in a blog post on Thursday. “Months before the mass download of files, Mr. Levandowski told colleagues that he had plans to ‘replicate’ Waymo’s technology at a competitor.”

When FORBES interviewed Levandowski in October 2016, he attempted to explain how a startup like Otto, on its own and then as part of Uber, could spin up its own functional self-driving technology in less than a year. He said that this was his fourth time building an autonomous car technology stack.

“We understand what not to do and where not to waste time, because we have experience from having tried it before and it didn’t work,” Levandowski said. “And we have experience trying things that do work, so we’re just doing the things that do work, and focus on that.”

With reporting from Miguel Helft.

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